

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF INFORMATION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

01-212:CEE:bk
Ser 2982
22 August 1963

From: Chief of Information
To: Distribution List

Subj: Information Fact Sheet, Guantanamo Bay; forwarding of

Encl: (1) Subject Fact Sheet

1. To provide Navy personnel with official, unclassified information on matters of national importance, the Chief of Information will issue, as circumstances require, information fact sheets on timely subjects.
2. The first such report, on Guantanamo Bay, is forwarded herewith as enclosure (1).
3. Commanders are urged to effect wide internal dissemination of this and subsequent factual material on subjects of Navy interest.

W. P. MACK

DISTRIBUTION.

All Naval Districts & River Commands
CINCLANTFLT
CINCPACFLT
COMNAVBASE, CHMO
COMMANDANT, USMC

Authenticated:

P. R. TAYLOR, Jr.
LCDR, USN

UNITED STATES NAVAL BASE, GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA

- I. Treaty Rights
- II. Strategic Importance
- III. General Information
- IV. Economic Factors

I. Treaty Rights.

Guantanamo Naval Base is the oldest United States overseas military base. Because of this, its development for the performance of its mission is essentially complete. Rights regarding the base are founded on two agreements and one treaty.

(a) 1903 Agreement to Lease.

A United States-Cuba agreement to lease was signed by President Estrada Palma on 16 February 1903, and by President Theodore Roosevelt on 23 February 1903. It set forth the boundaries of the area and granted the U.S. the right to perform all necessary work to fully develop the area. The agreement recognized that Cuba retained ultimate sovereignty (not fully defined) over the 19,621 land acres (11,058 windward side; 8,563 leeward side) and 9,196 water acres consisting principally of Guantanamo Bay. The total reservation contains 28,817 acres or approximately 45 square miles of land and water, based on the original survey.

(b) 1903 Lease Agreement.

By a lease agreement ratified on October 6, 1903, by both countries, the United States agreed to pay Cuba \$2,000 in gold coin annually for the use of the leased area so long as the U.S. continued to occupy it. This was changed to \$3,386.25 in lawful money in lieu of gold coin when gold coin was discontinued and the dollar devalued in 1934.

In consideration of an agreement by the U.S. not to allow any commercial development within the area, the U.S. was exempted from paying any customs duties or fees on any material imported into the area for exclusive use and consumption therein.

(c) 1934 Treaty of Relations.

In 1934 both countries ratified a Treaty of Relations, Article III of which reaffirmed the provisions of the two previous agreements and provided that "so long as the United States of America shall not abandon the Naval Station of Guantanamo or the two governments shall not agree to a modification of its present limits, the station shall continue to have the territorial area that it now has with the limits it has on the date of the signature of the present treaty."

(d) Reaffirmation.

On January 6, 1959, the Castro regime advised the United States in a note that: "We are pleased to advise that the Revolutionary Government has complete control of the Republic that all international commitments and agreements in force will be ratified...."

II. Strategic Importance.

A glance at a map reveals the strategic importance of the Naval Base at Guantanamo and explains the need for its continued use. It lies at one corner of a strategic rectangle of bases in the Caribbean from which ships and aircraft can be deployed quickly to any trouble spot to assist member nations of the Organization of American States in resisting alien penetration.

Naval units based at Guantanamo and at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, can maintain surveillance over the principal passages to the Caribbean: Windward Passage at the eastern tip of Cuba, Mona Passage between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and Anegada Passage between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Guantanamo also protects the eastern approaches to the Panama Canal, one of the most important waterways in the Western Hemisphere. In terms of merchant ship speeds, the Canal saves 21 days steaming time in a voyage from Norfolk to San Diego.

Teamed with units from Key West, Guantanamo-based ships and aircraft can effectively patrol the Yucatan Straits connecting the Caribbean and the Gulf. Its key location in the Caribbean and its proximity to the United States mainland, only 500 miles from Miami, make Guantanamo our most important base in the vital Caribbean area.

In addition to these strategic considerations, Guantanamo is important for its peacetime role as a major training base for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Ships of all types "shakedown" in the Guantanamo area and its large deep-draft harbor provides near-perfect shelter for the largest ships in the Navy as well as a wide variety of smaller ships. As many as forty destroyers can anchor in the bay at one time, while six piers and one wharf can accommodate a large number of additional units.

III. General Information.

Built on rolling ground, the base is divided into two sections by the deep waters of Guantanamo Bay. Travel between the two areas, known as Leeward and Windward, is accomplished by ferryboat or, in special cases, by helicopter. Of the two, Windward is the largest and most heavily developed, including most of the housing on the base, as well as warehouses, workshops and recreational facilities. Both sides of the base have airfields.

Navy and Marine Corps personnel assigned to Guantanamo number approximately 4,200. There are also about 200 U.S. civilian employees (with 100 dependents) on the base and about 3,000 Cuban workers are employed there. In addition to the shore-based military and civilian personnel, an average of 4,500 ship-based military personnel are generally present in the area.

There are 1,033 family housing units at Guantanamo, with more under construction, accommodating some 2,200 military dependents.

The base also maintains its own medical facilities, with a dental clinic and a 100-bed hospital, in which an average of 20 babies are born each month. The base school has 41 classrooms and a normal enrollment of 1,000 children.

To provide for the recreational needs of transient ships' crews and base personnel, Guantanamo has a wide variety of entertainment facilities ranging from baseball fields to boat and bicycle rental stations. There are six swimming pools, 20 bowling alleys, basketball, tennis and volleyball courts, a 27 hole golf course, four hobby shops, a photographic darkroom, riding stables, a roller-skating rink and a boxing ring.

In addition, base personnel operate a radio-TV station affiliated with the Armed Forces Radio Service, and publish a daily newspaper, the GITMO GAZETTE.

Skin diving is a popular off-duty activity. A swimming pier was constructed recently next to the recreation park at Windward Point near the entrance of the bay. The pier serves as a launching platform for underwater spear fishermen.

A very important morale factor at the isolated base are its recreational clubs. Enlisted men have a well equipped building known as the "White Hat Club." There are also a Petty Officers' Club, a Family Lounge in the housing area, a Marine Barracks Club and one at the Naval Air Station.

The Officers' Club has many facilities including a dining room, dancing pavilion, stag bar, bowling alleys, tennis courts, a swimming pool for adults and two separate ones for youngsters. There is a snack bar for serving light lunches and beverages throughout the day.

At present all of the electric power used on the base is generated in the base power plants. A limited amount of power was purchased from Cuban plants until October 1961 when floods damaged the transmission lines. Although it is understood that repairs have been completed, power supply has not been resumed. Power used during 1961 exceeded 38.5 million KWH.

All fresh water used on the base is received from a Cuban pumping plant located on the Yateras River. The water is treated and distributed for use throughout the base. Water consumed during 1961 totaled 745 million gallons.

The total book value of the Guantanamo installations, buildings, and facilities is \$76 million.

Responsibility for the entire area is vested in the Commander, U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who exercises command through eight subordinate activities. They are the Naval Station, Naval Air Station, Marine Barracks, Naval Hospital, Naval Dental Clinic, Public Works Center, Naval Supply Depot and a Mobile Construction Battalion.

Base security is an "all hands" function and sailors as well as marines follow a comprehensive training course in the use of firearms, tactics and ground defense exercises.

IV. Economic Factors.

Located in Oriente Province, 20 miles from Guantanamo City, the nearest community of significant size, the Naval Base was constructed in an unproductive and sparsely inhabited area little used by the Cuban people. Inadequate rainfall combined with poor soil and hilly terrain rendered the area unsuitable for agricultural use.

The operation of the base at one time provided substantial and continuing economic advantages to Cuba. Even today approximately 2,100 Cubans are employed by the U.S. Government and an additional 900 by non-appropriated fund activities. The annual payroll for these services averages \$6.1 million. In addition the cost of water purchased from Cuba by the U.S. averages \$170,000 annually.

Prior to November 1960 the U.S. purchased goods and produce from Cuba at the rate of \$650,000 per year. However, this procurement was curtailed sharply at that time and was subsequently terminated in February 1962. In the past American personnel and their dependents are estimated to have spent in excess of \$100,000 every year during visits to the nearby cities of Caimanera, Guantanamo City and Santiago. This revenue is no longer available to the Cuban economy.

Although anti-American propaganda generated by the current Cuban regime has been consistent and heavy, favorable relations have been maintained with Cuban employees of the Naval Base. By and large these employees are long-time U.S. civil servants. Some 500 Cuban workers have taken up residence on the base.

The other Cuban workmen commute to the base through the big Northeast Gate, which serves as the main access point to the Guantanamo naval complex. Leaving their cars and buses on the Cuban side, the workmen pass through two gates - one manned by Cuban troops and one by marines. - and then board Navy buses which transport them to their places of employment.

Security of the base is enhanced by a chain link fence along the base boundary. This fence is patrolled continuously by Marine Corps sentries. On its side the Cuban government has planted a cactus fence which is patrolled by an elite unit of the Cuban Army.

The United States intends to retain Guantanamo as a major base. At a press conference on May 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy described as "completely untrue" any suggestion that the United States might be planning to abandon the base. He said "such action has never been considered."